

Extracts of a Letter from Dr. Forster, of Bruges.

"I have long wished to call the attention of the Society to a very curious fact in the chronology of lunations, if I may so express myself; but I have always been deterred by an apprehension that it had so much the air of superstition about it, that it might, in many minds, rather excite ridicule than interest. Still, however, facts are not to be despised, and I have resolved to point out to you, that whenever the new moon has fallen on a Saturday, the following twenty days have been wet and windy. This must depend on some cycle of lunations whose influence on our atmosphere has hitherto escaped the notice of meteorologists. I first perceived the coincidence to which I allude in Sussex, in the years 1817-27, and at that time thought it accidental, but on accurately examining a journal of the weather kept in my family by my grandfather, my father, and myself, in succession, I find that in every twenty Saturdays' new moons, nineteen have been actually stormy and the rest doubtful; and this has been the case ever since our journal began, A.D. 1767, up to the present time. I find, too, that the greatest storms of wind on record have been during the month following a *Saturday's moon*. It would be interesting to know whether this observation applies to other latitudes, and with a view of ascertaining the same, it is that I have thought it worth while to call the attention of the Society to the subject. For, during the last twenty-nine years, I have been enabled, in some measure, to predict the sort of weather that we should have for a long period, by examining the calculated times of new moon. It may here be observed, that stormy months, thus indicated, are characterised by the prevalence of S.W. and W. winds.

"Periodical and other Meteors.—On the night of the 13th of November last, a clear interval occurring between 10^h and 13^h 50^m, I observed the sky to be marked by numerous small meteors shooting, in general, towards some point in the heavens, as nearly as I could judge N.N.W.; but unfortunately I was not in a position to make any accurate observations. Several hundreds of meteors must have occurred during the three hours and a half to which I allude; the clouds then closing the sky, I gave up observation. The meteors were small and very white, and generally left long trains behind them: one meteor had a contrary direction, it was larger than the rest, and moved slowly across the zenith towards the S.E. I am most decidedly of opinion that this phenomenon is altogether atmospherical and connected with electrical changes; nor does their motion, in the apparent direction of the magnetic poles, at all militate against this hypothesis of their electrical origin. A few occurred last 10th August, during a disturbed state of the atmospheric electricity; and I saw three on the 20th December."

On the Variability of λ Tauri. By Mr. Baxendell.

"On the night of the 6th instant I observed that the star λ Tauri was decidedly less bright than usual, being barely equal

to ν , a little less bright than γ , and decidedly below \circ and ξ , whilst on the previous night I had noted it down as being a little brighter than \circ and ξ , and decidedly above γ and ν , and in all my former observations I had invariably placed it above γ . On the following night (the 7th) it had nearly recovered its usual lustre, being decidedly brighter than ν , above γ , and equal to \circ and ξ . A short time previous to the 6th instant I had remarked that my former observations of the stars \circ , ξ , and λ *Tauri* exhibited discordances which rendered it impossible to fix, with certainty, the order in which these stars ought to be placed. After the observations on the nights of the 6th and 7th instant, there could be no doubt that these discordances were mainly, if not wholly, due to the variability of λ ; and on carefully re-examining all my observations of this star, I was led to infer that its changes were accomplished in a period of only about four days. I therefore continued to watch it very closely, and on the night of the 10th instant had the satisfaction of again observing it reduced to an equality with ν . As, however, the presence of the moon on that night might be supposed to have interfered with the estimations, I have continued my observations regularly since; and having observed λ decidedly reduced in brightness on the nights of the 14th, 18th, and 22d inst., I can no longer have any hesitation in concluding that this star belongs to the list of variable stars of short period, being, in fact, the next in order after β *Persei*, the period of which is the shortest yet known."

Dr. Gerling, of Marburg, published (*Astron. Nach.* 502) an account of a method for determining the parallax of the sun by observations on *Venus* and *Mars* when nearest the earth, and requested the co-operation of American astronomers. Lieut. Gilliss, having satisfied himself that the method was feasible, volunteered his services to the American government to carry Dr. Gerling's proposal into effect, and the expedition is now preparing.

Lieut. Gilliss is to place himself in the most suitable station he can find on the coast of Chili, where he is to make meridian and extra-meridian observations of both planets, at the proper times, in correspondence with other observers at home. He also proposes to observe an extensive catalogue of southern stars, and make various astronomical and magnetical observations. His instruments are a 3-foot meridian circle, with a telescope of 52 lines aperture, made by Pistor and Martius, of Berlin, under Professor Encke's direction; a 5-foot equatoreal, with clock motion, by Fraunhofer; clock, chronometers, &c. Lieut. Gilliss expects to leave home in about six months, and to be absent two or three years.

At the close of the evening the Chairman informed the meeting that the Astronomer Royal had presented the models of Lord Rosse's telescope and polishing machine to the Society. Thanks were returned to the Astronomer Royal for his present. They are now in the meeting-room for examination.